

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION



March/April 2020

Xplor



MARCH GETS
WILD IN WETLANDS

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We Want to Hear From You!

We'd love to know what you think about Xplor.

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We recycle.
You can, too! Share
Xplor with friends.

Dig it! Spadefoots dig burrows in loose soil using shovel-like bumps on their hind feet. When spring rains fall, the thumb-sized amphibians pop out of their hidey-holes to find mates.

by Jim Rathert

ON THE COVER

Green Heron

by Noppadol Paothong

GET OUT!

FUN THINGS TO DO
AND GREAT PLACES
TO DISCOVER NATURE



SNAG A SPOONBILL!

The Discover Nature — Families Paddlefish Snagging Clinic happens on Saturday, April 11. Choose from two sessions: 8 a.m.–1 p.m. or 10 a.m.–3 p.m. Begin in the Warsaw Community Building and end with a 2-hour snagging trip on Lake of the Ozarks. First-time participants only. Registration opens March 10. Call 660-530-5500.



TAKE YOUR FAVORITE GROWN-UP FOR A WILDFLOWER WALK.

Don't forget to look overhead. Redbuds and many other kinds of trees bloom in March and April.

SPRING BIRD MIGRATION STARTS TO PEAK IN MID-APRIL.

How many birds can you identify?



AMERICAN TOADS START SINGING ON WARM APRIL NIGHTS. Make a house for them in your yard. Turn a chipped clay pot upside down in a shady, leafy area. Set a clay saucer on top to keep it dark and cool.

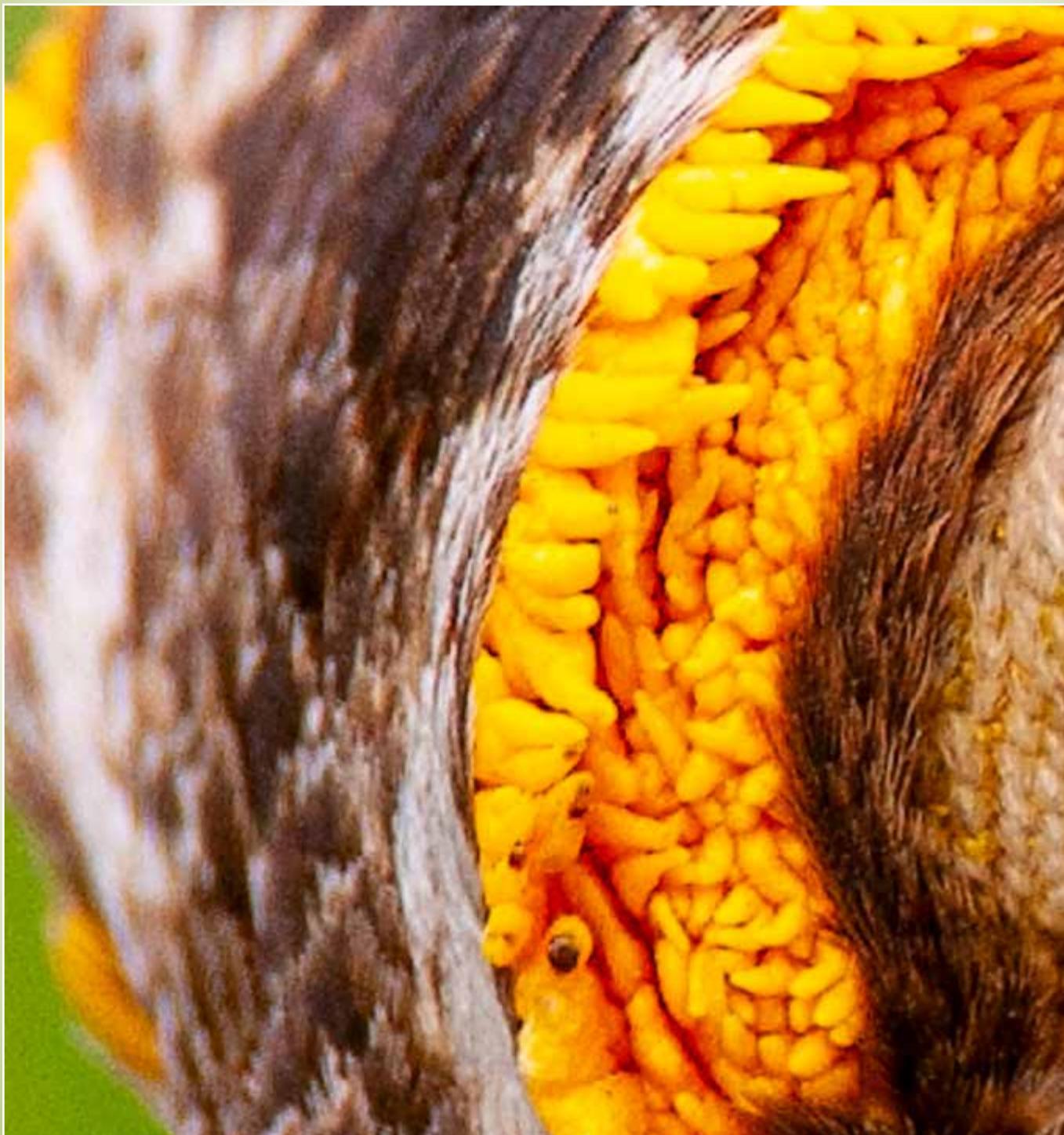


NINE-BANDED ARMADILLOS GIVE BIRTH near the end of March. Each mama has four identical babies.

WHAT IS IT?

DON'T KNOW?

Jump to Page 20 to find out.



- ① We gather to dance at a place called the lek.
- ② I puff up my eyebrows and the sacs on my neck.

- ③ I boom, stomp, and shake to beat all the rest.
- ④ And prove to the girls that I am the best.

Into the WILD forest floor

The leaves that litter the forest floor hide a secret world of amazing creatures.



LOOK

Dainty wildflowers brighten the brown blanket of dead leaves. How many of these beauties can you spot this spring?



Ounce for ounce, the eastern **hercules beetle** might be Missouri's mightiest animal. The 2-inch-long insects can carry more than 100 times their weight. If you were that strong, you could easily pick up a pickup.

Taste

What's better than finding a mess of morels? Eating them! These mouthwatering mushrooms pop up on forest floors in mid-April. Morels are yummy, but some mushrooms are poisonous. Always get a grown-up to help you identify fungi.



Did You Know?

If a hungry bird grabs a harvestman by the leg, the creeping creature parts ways with its limb. The detached leg twitches, giving the harvestman time to sneak away. Unfortunately, the missing leg never grows back.

LOOK

Harvestmen — aka daddy longlegs — creep over leaves on their long, spindly legs. These close relatives of spiders, mites, and scorpions are harmless to humans. The idea that they possess deadly venom is a myth.

Take a Closer Look

Sift through layers of leaves, and you'll uncover a host of critters with more legs than most.

Sowbugs and pillbugs are more closely related to shrimp than to insects. You can tell these land-loving crustaceans apart quite easily. Pillbugs can roll into a ball when threatened; sowbugs cannot.

Legs churning, centipedes tunnel under leaves looking for insects and other tiny creatures to eat. Centipedes have one pair of legs on each body segment.

Most millipedes eat dead leaves and plants. Millipedes have two pairs of legs on each body segment.

LOOK

Several kinds of lizards hunt and hide among the leaves. Keep your eyes peeled for these quick and colorful reptiles.

Prairie lizard



Heads Up!

Centipedes can deliver a painful bite, and many millipedes release a stinky liquid that can burn skin. It's best to observe these creatures without picking them up.

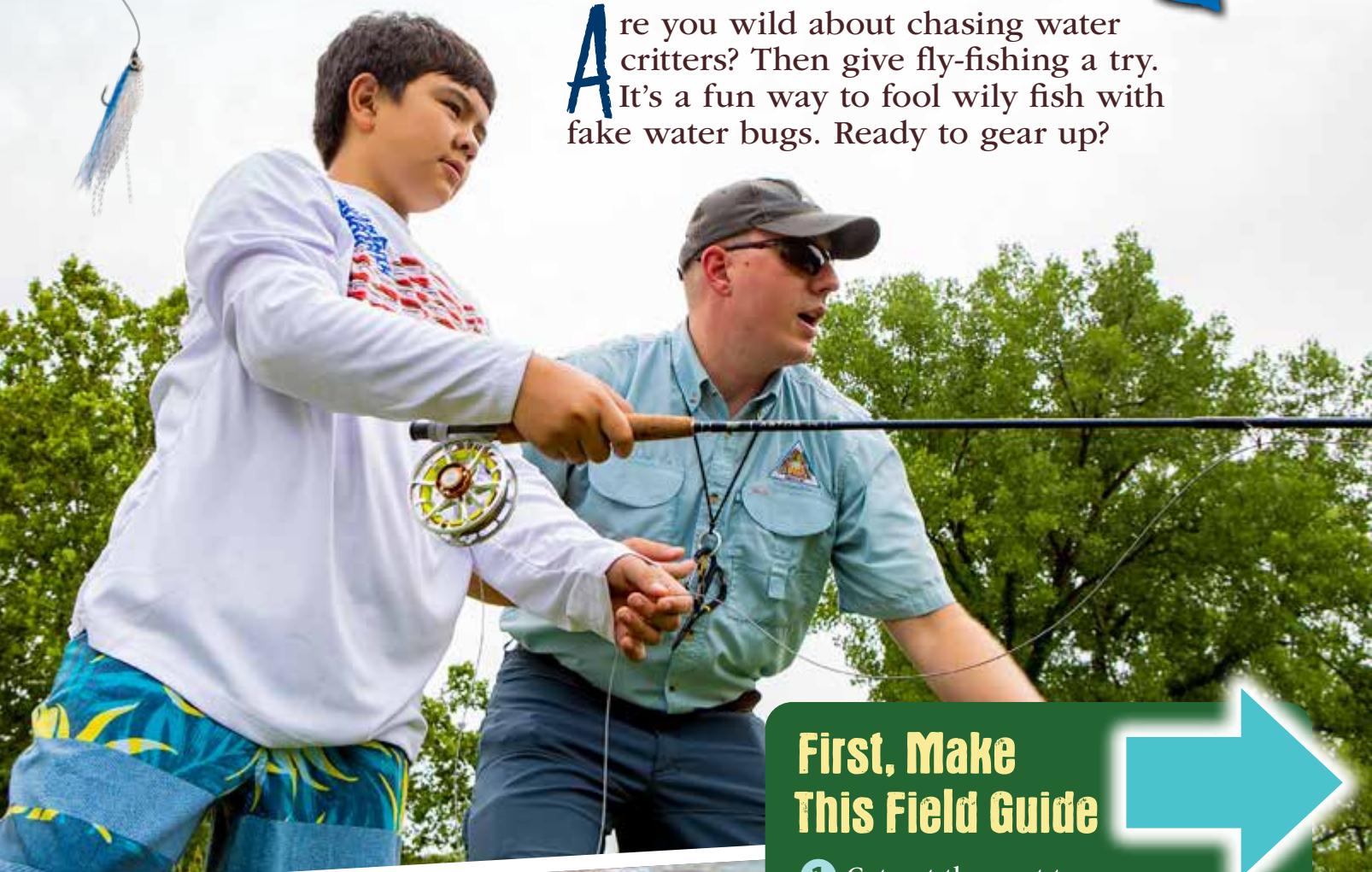
Broad-headed skink:
Rebekah D. Wallace, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org



Let's Go Fly-Fishing!

by Bonnie Chasteen

Are you wild about chasing water critters? Then give fly-fishing a try. It's a fun way to fool wily fish with fake water bugs. Ready to gear up?



First, Make This Field Guide

- 1 Cut out the next two pages along the dotted lines.
- 2 Fold each cut-out down the middle.
- 3 Stack the cut-outs so the pages are in numerical order.
- 4 Staple the cut-outs together along the middle between pages 8 and 9.
- 5 Keep this field guide with your fishing gear.



mdc.mo.gov

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Handle with Care

Decide if you're going to keep your fish or release it immediately. If you're fishing for trout, you're required to release your catch at certain areas during certain times of the year. For this reason, it's important to know how to handle and release a fish so that it has the best chance of surviving once it's back in the water.

- Try to avoid handling your catch, and wet your hands if you must touch it. Wetting your hands protects the fish's skin.
- Use a net.
- Use hemostats to gently guide the hook out of the fish's mouth.
- Lower the fish back into the water as soon as you can.



Field tip

Sliding the fish gently back into the water as soon as you release it from the hook improves its chances of survival.



A Mini Field Guide to Fooling Fish With Fake Bugs

1

Know your Flies

Flies are made to look like the critters they mimic. This look-alike formation, combined with your tricky fly moves, is what fools the fish into striking. To learn how to make your own woolly bugger, turn to Page 18.



Friend a Fly-Angler

Nothing beats having a friend in the field if you're just learning to fly-fish. Do you know an experienced fly-angler? They can help you choose the right gear, put it together, practice your cast, point out the best places to fish, and help you bring your catch to hand. If you're keeping your catch, your fly-fishing BFF can also help you clean it, cook it, and celebrate your success.

Sign Up for a Workshop

If you don't know any grown-up fly-anglers, you can register for a fly-fishing workshop at a Missouri Department of Conservation nature center. Many nature centers offer free fly-fishing workshops for beginners and their families. All you need to bring is a grown-up who shares your interest in learning how to fly-fish. The workshop leaders will provide everything else. Browse fishing events at short.mdc.mo.gov/ZWd.

2



Know the rules

To angle for fish like largemouth bass and bluegill in Missouri, you won't need to buy a fishing permit until you turn 16.

But a Trout Permit is required to keep any trout you catch and for all winter fishing in Maramec Spring Park, Bennett Spring State Park, Montauk State Park, and Roaring River State Park. You will also need a Trout Permit any time you fish in Lake Taneycomo upstream from the U.S. Highway 65 bridge. In addition, many community lakes and other conservation areas have special fishing regulations.

For more information about fishing regulations, including permits, seasons, and limits, visit mdc.mo.gov/fishing.

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Gather Your Gear

Reel

The reel's job is to hold your line and reel it in after a cast. A simple reel will get you started.



Backing

This strong, braided line (pictured in orange) gives your fly line a base on the spool. It can also help you fight a big, strong fish.

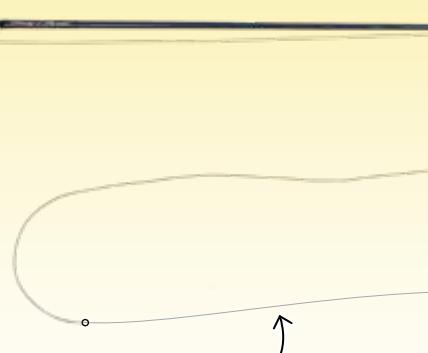


Nail clippers

To nip fishing line.

Rod

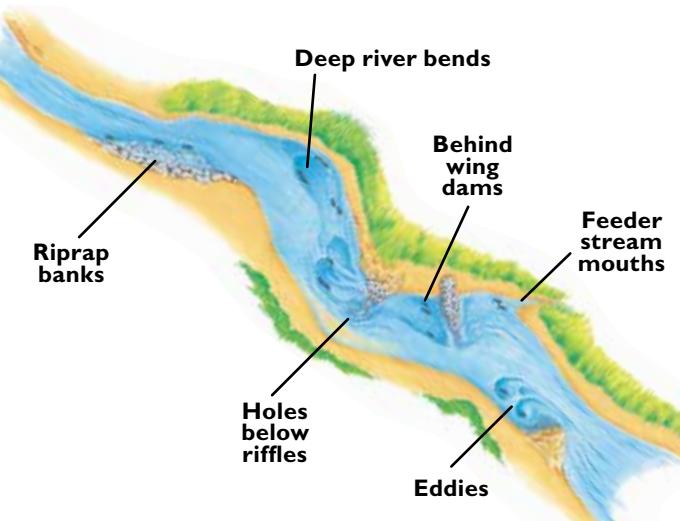
A 9-foot, 5/6-weight rod is a good fit for most beginners. It's easy to handle and bendy enough to let you cast the line where you want it.



Leader

This 9-foot length of strong, light, nearly invisible line has a thick end, called a butt end, and a thin end. The butt end attaches to your floating line, and the thin end attaches to the tippet.

Streams and rivers



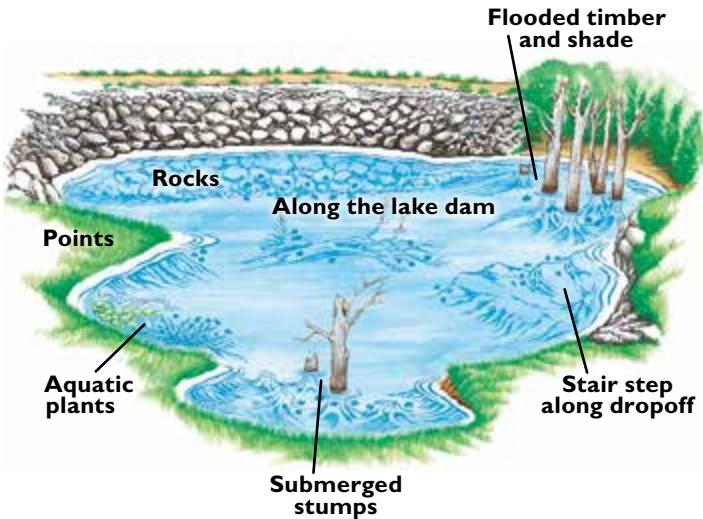
Find Places to Fish Near You

Wherever you live in Missouri, there's probably a public pond, lake, or stream access near you. In cities, many lakes are stocked with trout, bass, and other popular fish. To find great places to fish, visit mdc.mo.gov/fishing.

Read the Water

Fish hang out near food and where they feel safe from predators. Try casting near things like rocks, root wads, sunken trees, or water plants. This is where fish can rest and still dart out to snatch prey. Other great places to find fish are labeled on the illustrations.

Ponds and lakes



12

Fish, Food, Mimics, and Methods

Knowing what kinds of food fish like to eat in the wild can help you choose what kinds of mimics to cast their way. Turn the page to learn where fish hang out in ponds and streams. Once you cast, make your fly act like a real critter.

Largemouth and smallmouth bass

Know their foods: Will eat whatever they can fit into their mouths: flies, frogs, tadpoles, minnows, crayfish.

Choose a mimic: Anything tied on a larger hook (a big woolly bugger or a crayfish pattern, for example).

Work this way: In still water, cast to weed beds, etc. Pulling in your line with short jerks will usually prompt a strike.

In streams, cast across and upstream, letting the current carry the fly into fishy areas.



10



Hemostats

Looks like scissors, but it's really a clamp. Good for pinching down hook barbs, which makes it easier to gently remove hooks from fish — or from yourself.



Fly box

Keeps your bugs tidy and easy to choose.

Floating line

This line is thin for most of its length, but one end is thick. You attach the thin end to your backing and the thick end to your leader.

Tippet

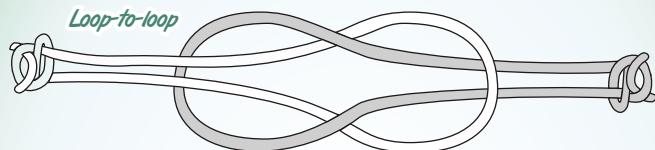
This line is only a couple of feet long, and you tie your fly to it. Using a tippet will make your leader last longer.

Net

Makes landing easier for you and safer for your fish (especially if you need to release it).



5



Connect tippet to leader

The loop-to-loop system is the fastest way.

- 1 Tie a simple loop about two inches long in the end of your leader.
- 2 Tie another loop in the end of your tippet.
- 3 Pass the tippet knot over the leader knot.
- 4 Pass the leader loop over the fly.
- 5 Pull tight, and you've got a strong connection.

Field tip

Make up several tippets with a fly tied to one end and a loop in the other. This will save you time if you lose a fly or need to change flies quickly.

7

Put it All Together

Your fly-fishing BFF can help you put your rod together and load/attach the reel. Or the folks at the store where you buy your fishing gear are usually happy to do this for you.

Field tips

Thread your rod

Bending the leader line makes it easier to push it through the eyelets.



Tie a fly to your tippet first

The Davy knot is the simplest way to tie a fly to your tippet, but practice the knot before you go out. Using a piece of kitchen string and a keychain ring will help your hands get the feel for the knot fast.



6

Panfish like bluegill, sunfish, and crappie

Know their foods: Eat the same foods as bass, but they have smaller mouths. They can also be fearful of movement, so letting the fly settle before jigging it is a good idea.



Bluegill



Longear sunfish



White crappie

Choose a mimic: Smaller flies like black widows, a small popping bug, or a Clouser minnow.

Work this way: In still water, let the ripples disperse before slowly moving the fly.

In streams, cast upstream and let the bug float down to a fishy spot.



Rainbow trout



Brown trout

Trout

Know their foods: Nymphs, aka baby bugs, that generally float and sink instead of swim.

Choose a mimic: Hare's ear nymph, San Juan worm, mop fly, or mega worm.

Work this way: Whether in ponds or streams, let the nymph sink. Keep your rod low and pull in your line slowly. Watch the end of your line. If it moves suddenly, set the hook!

11

Practice Your Cast

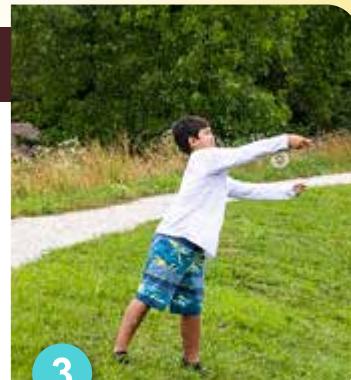
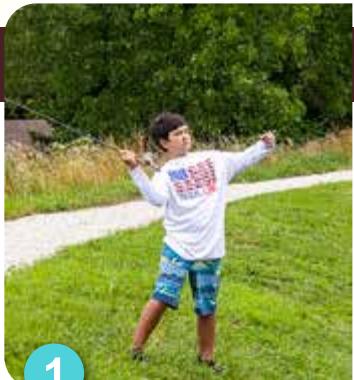
Casting with your fly rod can be as easy as 1-2-3, but it helps to practice a bit before you head to the water.

What you'll need

- A rod and reel ready to go
- A short piece of red yarn tied to the end of your tippet
- A hula hoop or other target placed 15–20 feet away from where you'll be standing

Grab the yarn, pull out about 20 feet of line, and lay it in front of you. Face the yarn, standing so that your rod shoulder is a little behind your free shoulder. This will help you avoid jerking the yarn (or hook) into your face.

- 1 Keep your eye on the yarn, and quickly raise the rod, bringing the yarn back past your head and above your shoulder.
- 2 When the yarn gets just above your shoulder, quickly bring the rod forward, aiming toward the hula hoop. Watch the line sweep out and sail toward your target.
- 3 Before the yarn lands, lower the tip of your rod toward the ground (or water).



Your fly-fishing BFF can help you practice this until you hit the target most times.

Field tips

- To avoid snagging stuff (or people) behind you — watch your rod tip as you cast.
- If you get snagged (and you will), try to free your hook by holding your rod tip high and jiggling it. Move around to change the angle. If the hook won't free, you'll probably have to break your line. First, pull your shirtsleeve down over your hand to protect it. Then, wrap the line several times around your hand. Point the rod tip at the snag and steadily pull or back away until the line breaks or the hook pulls free.

8

9



Marsh Madness

These critters are the scrappiest, snappiest, and flappiest around.
But only one will win this battle in the bulrushes.

by Matt Seek

Every year in March, the best college basketball squads from across the country compete in a super tournament to see who has the top team. Sports fans call this event March Madness.

And every year in March, millions of ducks and geese descend on Missouri's wetlands to rest and refuel on their way north to nest. In our mucky marshes and soggy swamps, these feathered visitors join thousands of local critters — such as muskrats, mink, and snapping turtles — who are suddenly busy after a slow winter. Visiting a marsh in March offers a chance to see one of nature's truly epic events.

So what would happen if you combined these two March marvels? What if wetland creatures competed to find out who was marsh master? Xplor has you covered. Turn the page to find out ...

Sweet 16



MINK are as quick and nimble as ninjas. And strong jaws let them sink fangs into the skulls of prey. But **MUSKRATS** can hide underwater for 17 minutes. So this clash hinges on location. Mink win on land. Muskrats win in water.



GIZZARD SHAD swim in schools. When a predator is spotted, the school splits apart in a flash of slippery silver. **MERGANSERS** have webbed feet that churn like canoe paddles and toothy beaks that are perfect for piercing prey.



If a **CRAYFISH'S** pinchy claws and armor-clad body doesn't discourage foes, it can flick its tail to shoot backward under a rock. **RIVER OTTERS**, however, swim faster than many fish and have special teeth to crush shells.



You'd bet a **SNAIL'S** shell would protect it from a weak-beaked mallard. But like most birds, **MALLARDS** have a gizzard, an organ that grinds up hard foods like grains, insects, and snails. This really isn't much of a match.

Elite Eight



After winning its first battle, the slinky **MINK** is hungry for more. To subdue prey, mink wrap their skinny bodies around victims and bite so quickly it's hard to follow with the human eye. Of course, **MERGANSERS** can fly to escape predators, but they must pitter-patter on the water to get airborne.



Turn the page to see which critters made it to the



Though the **OTTER** dominated its first match, its next won't be so easy. **MALLARDS** have super-sharp vision and can watch above, below, forward, and backward at the same time. So sneaking up on this wary duck is almost impossible. And if a threat is spotted, a mallard can rocket straight up off the water.



Sweet 16

Elite Eight

After chomping the frog, the **SNAPPER** sinks underwater to digest its win. Half-buried in marsh muck, the turtle's mud-colored skin and algae-covered shell offer perfect camouflage as it awaits its next opponent. **GREEN HERONS** stalk fish by wading silently through shallow water. Will the bird wade too deep?



CHORUS FROGS bag bugs along the edges of marshes. **SNAPPING TURTLES** prefer deeper haunts. The thumb-sized frog is barely an appetizer for a snapper, but if it wanders too close to the turtle's open jaws, the frog might croak.



GREEN HERONS miss half the prey they try for, so they sometimes drop bait into water to lure fish into range. If a **GREEN SUNFISH** spots the heron, it can out-swim the bird's beak. But if the fish takes the bait, it's sushi.



Final Four of Marsh Madness.

This battle will be one for the ages, and it hinges upon the size of the two opponents. **BULLFROGS** will eat anything they can cram into their cavernous mouths — even snakes. But the bigger a **SNAKE** grows, the harder it is to eat, and the easier it becomes to bite back. Who do you think will win?



With large eyes that see in nearly all directions at once, it's hard to sneak up on a **DRAGONFLY**. But **BULLFROGS** can unroll their long, sticky tongues to snare prey. And they can do it five times faster than you can blink.



Nerve cells on each side of a **MINNOW** feel vibrations in the water, giving the fish a jump on predators. But if a **WATERSNAKE** grabs a fish, there's little hope for escape. The snake's hooked teeth are made to hold slippery fish.



Final Four



Both of these meat-munching mammals deserve their spot in the final four. As members of the weasel family, **MINK** and **RIVER OTTERS** share many of the same traits. For example, mink are so at ease in water, they've been seen floating down streams curled up in balls, apparently sound asleep. And while pursuing fish and other aquatic prey, otters often twist their streamlined bodies into turns so tight it would make a ballet dancer dizzy.

So they're both great swimmers. But who will win this war in the water? It may come down to size. From the tip of its bitey snout to the end of its furry tail, a mink rarely measures longer than 2 feet. Otters, on the other paw, are usually more than twice that size.



Marsh Madness



The final match of Marsh Madness is a contest between slow and bitey versus quick and mighty.

The **SNAPPING TURTLE'S** tough shell protects its body like a knight's suit of armor. But it's heavy. So although the snapper can lunge quickly, it usually plods slowly. And unlike many turtles, a snapper can't pull its head or legs completely into its shell. Its plastron — the lower shell — is

The Winner

Championship

barely big enough to cover its belly.

Sure, the **RIVER OTTER** has superior speed and agility, but the fierce furbearer better beware of the snapper's serious bite. Contrary to popular belief, a human can actually bite harder than a snapping turtle. Yet a snapper's sharp, bony beak can easily shear off a finger — or a careless otter's paw. And when a snapper grabs something in its jaws, it rarely lets go.



The final battle was epic! Using its speed and agility, the **OTTER** managed to escape the snapper's crushing jaws. It herded the turtle into shallow water then flipped the cold-blooded beast

onto its back. It was over soon after that. The turtle's lower shell was no match for the otter's bone-crunching teeth, and in short order, the snapper was chomped.

In this made-up matchup, the river otter won. But in real life, otters haven't always been so lucky. When Missouri first became a state, people didn't take care of nature. They drained marshes and polluted rivers. With fewer places to hunt for food and raise babies, river otters almost disappeared.

Luckily, people cleaned up their act. By the 1980s, there were enough healthy habitats for biologists to release several hundred otters into wetlands and rivers across the state. Before they started, there were fewer than 100 otters in Missouri. Today, otters are common across the state. You might say it was an *otter* success!

Final Four



In this round between reptiles, there's no way for a **NORTHERN WATERSNAKE** to take down a **SNAPPING TURTLE**. Unlike their cottonmouth cousins, northern watersnakes aren't equipped with fangs or venom. So biting the snapper won't do much damage, especially when you consider the turtle's tough shell. And snakes swallow their prey whole. Even though the snake's jaws can open freakishly wide, there's no way it could stretch its pie-hole around a full-grown snapper.

But don't write the snake off yet. Watersnakes are quick, twisty, and nimble on land and in water. And turtles aren't known for their speed. Rather than chase down prey, snappers prefer to hide in the marsh muck and wait patiently for prey to come to them. As long as the snake doesn't stray into snapping range, catching it could be a challenge.



THE STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE ISN'T ALWAYS A FAIR FIGHT

THIS ISSUE:

MISSISSIPPI KITE VS DRAGONFLY

Illustrated by
David Besenger

Herd Bird

Kites sometimes soar over cows to nab insects flushed by the grazing animals.

Talon-ted Toes

Once a kite spots prey, it swoops in swiftly to pluck it up with needle-sharp talons.

Buzz Off!

Each wing can move separately from the others, allowing a dragonfly to turn on a dime.

Mighty Sghty

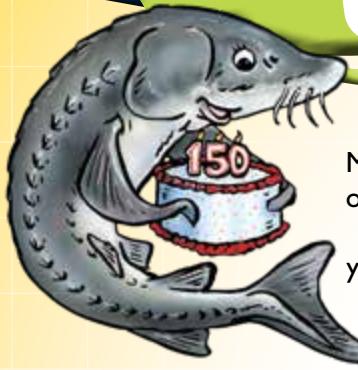
Huge eyes are covered with 30,000 "mini eyes" that help a dragonfly see in almost every direction.

AND THE WINNER IS...

The dragonfly's amazing vision and flying skills are no match for the kite's overpowering speed. The bird gobbles down the unlucky insect in midair then moves on to snatch its next in-flight snack.

STRANGE but TRUE!

YOUR GUIDE TO ALL THE
UNUSUAL, UNIQUE,
AND UNBELIEVABLE
STUFF THAT GOES ON IN NATURE



Not only is the **LAKE STURGEON** one of Missouri's largest fishes, but it's also one of our longest-lived. The 8-foot giants can survive to be over 150 years old. Despite their name, most lake sturgeons live in big rivers like the Missouri and Mississippi.

PEREGRINE FALCONS aren't picky eaters. Biologists have recorded the ravenous raptors eating 450 different kinds of birds — everything from 5-foot-tall sandhill cranes to 3-inch-small hummingbirds.



An **EASTERN MOLE** couldn't see dirt if it were buried in it. The little digger's eyelids are fused shut, so the best its peepers can do is tell light from dark. But who needs sight underground? Moles use their keen senses of smell and touch to find food.

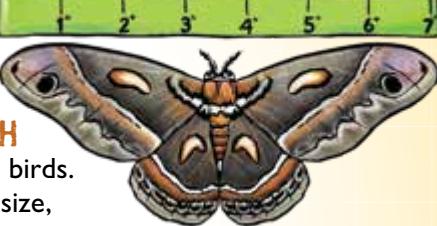


When an **ALLIGATOR SNAPPING TURTLE** wishes for fishes, it simply opens its mouth and wiggles its pink, worm-shaped tongue. Hungry fish that swim in for an easy meal learn too late where the name "snapper" comes from.



A **SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** nabs insects in midair, using its forked tail to swerve like a feathered fighter jet. It eats small bugs in flight, but brings bigger prey, like grasshoppers, back to a perch where it bashes them until they're less ... hoppy.

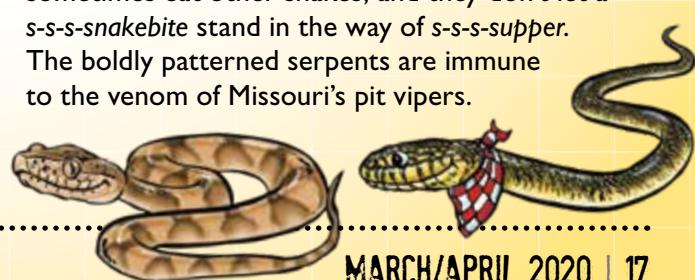
With a wingspan of 5 to 7 inches, a **CECROPIA MOTH** is bigger than some birds. Despite their large size, these fluffy flutterers don't eat a thing. Once the caterpillars turn into moths, they search for a mate, lay eggs, and then die.



Most birds have hollow bones. This reduces a bird's weight, which makes it easier to fly. But **COMMON LOONS** have solid bones. This helps the fish-eating fowl dive quickly so they can chase their finned food underwater.



Injection protection: **SPECKLED KINGSNAKES** sometimes eat other snakes, and they don't let a s-s-s-snakebite stand in the way of s-s-s-supper. The boldly patterned serpents are immune to the venom of Missouri's pit vipers.



HOW TO

A young girl with blonde hair tied back, wearing a blue quilted vest over a teal shirt, stands by a river. She is holding a fishing rod and looking towards the camera with a smile. The background shows a rocky bank and some foliage.

Make a Fly-Fishing Lure

Despite its funny name, the woolly bugger is one of the fishiest flies you can chuck in the water. Here's how to make one.

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED

- Size 2 cricket hook
- Fuzzy marabou feather (available at craft stores)
- Tape
- Scissors
- Pipe cleaner
- Plastic bead

HERE'S WHAT YOU DO



To a hungry fish, a woolly bugger looks like a swimming minnow, tadpole, or leech. That's why bugs fool so many bass, bluegill, and trout into taking a nibble.

Fly-anglers use fancy feathers and special tools to make woolly bugs. You can make one using simpler supplies. Any color will catch fish, but green, brown, and black bugs look more like natural foods.

FISHING TIPS

Tie a woolly bugger to your fishing line and pinch on some split shot for weight. Cast the lure into a pond or stream and count to three to let the bugger sink slowly into the water. Watch your line as it sinks. If the line twitches, gently set the hook.

Once the bugger is underwater, reel in the line at a pretty good pace. Pretend your bugger is a scared minnow trying to out-swim a hungry fish. If that doesn't get a bite, cast to a different location. This time, reel in with a jerky, start-stop motion that mimics an injured (and easily eaten) minnow.

For more fishing fun, check out *Let's Go Fly-Fishing!*, which starts on Page 6.



- 1 Measure the end of a feather so that it's about the same length as the straight part of the hook. This will become the tail of the woolly bugger.



- 2 Hold the feather so that the part you just measured sticks out behind the bend of the hook. Wrap tape tightly around the feather and hook, from the bend to the eye.



- 3 Use scissors to snip off the excess feather just behind the hook's eye.



- 4 Twist a pipe cleaner around and around the hook, starting just above the bend. Keep your wraps tight and close together. When you reach the eye of the hook, leave the extra pipe cleaner sticking out.



- 5 Thread a bead onto the pipe cleaner and push it over the eye of the hook.



- 6 Bend the pipe cleaner over the top of the bead. Snip off the pipe cleaner a little way behind the bead. Bend the extra pipe cleaner down to hold the bead in place.

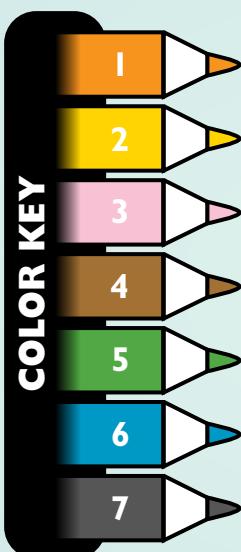
XPLOR-MOR

Secret Salamanders

For most of the year, spotted salamanders hide under rocks, logs, and leaves or in underground animal burrows. But on rainy nights in the spring, the candy-bar-sized amphibians creep from their hidey-holes and hike to fish-free ponds for a pool party. There, boys look for girlfriends, and girls lay lots of jellylike eggs. Tiny babies hatch from the eggs a month later and spend all summer underwater growing into adults.

INSTRUCTIONS

How many salamanders are partying at the pond? To find out, color each numbered shape by following the color key. Markers work best if you color directly in the magazine, or you can photocopy Page 21 and use crayons or colored pencils.



WHAT IS IT?

— FROM PAGE 3 —

make deep booming sounds. They stomp, shake their wings, and chase each other, sometimes striking with their wings, feet, and beaks. The best, most experienced fighters usually win favor with the girls. Learn more at mdc.mo.gov/field-guide.

From March through May, greater prairie-chickens do a mating dance. They gather at dawn on open prairie areas called leks. There, the boys puff up their orange eye combs and the air sacs on their necks. These inflated air sacs allow them to



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CRITTER CORNER

Red-Eared Slider



You're likely to see this turtle basking in the sun on logs or rocks from March until mid-October. The name "slider" comes from its habit of sliding quickly into the water when approached. Red-eared sliders look for mates between mid-March and mid-June. Mama sliders will leave the water to dig a nest and lay up to 22 eggs. Babies usually hatch in late summer or early fall. Learn more at mdc.mo.gov/field-guide.